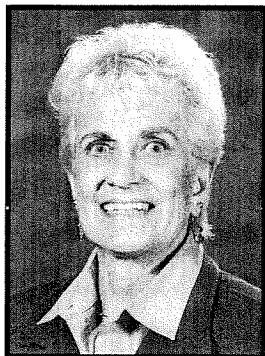


# Hammerstrom's

for the people  
in the 17th Senate District

## Hotline



State Senator  
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**MICHIGAN RANKS 4TH IN NATION FOR FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY.** Lowering the tax burden on residents and businesses has placed Michigan at the top of the nation in tax policy, according to a report issued by *USA Today*. The report analyzed the financial health of each state from 1997 to 2002 determined by three categories: tax system, bond rating, and spending restraint. States were assigned up to four stars in each category, with four stars being the highest possible score and one star being the lowest. Michigan received the highest scores possible in the categories of tax system and bond rating, and two stars for spending restraint. Michigan was ranked as the fourth overall best fiscally responsible state behind only Utah, Delaware, and Georgia.

**"CLAIM IT CORRECTLY" LEGISLATION PASSES LEGISLATURE.** The state Legislature has now approved Senate Bill 520, legislation that closes a real tax loophole and collects millions in lost revenue from unlawful homestead property exemptions. The Principal Residence Assurance Program is a major component of the Senate Republican proposal to balance the state's budget without raising taxes. Many out-of-state residents who own vacation homes in Michigan, and many residents who own multiple homes in the state, have duplicate exemptions in violation of Michigan law, sometimes

unknowingly. Included in the legislation is a program that would provide an incentive to allow counties and local units of government to be involved in the examination of principal residence exemptions. The program is expected to collect at least \$40 million in its first year.

**EXPANDED WEBSITE HELPS TRAVELERS AVOID CONSTRUCTION DELAYS.** The Michigan Department of Transportation recently announced the expansion of the information available on their website so that motorists can stay up-to-date on current road construction. Details on lane closures and restrictions on state roads will now include the eight-county Grand Region in West Michigan. As the area has long been a highly traveled tourist destination, for both in and out-of-state guests, the site is a welcome resource which will allow vacationers to plan their map routes around the problem areas. The site adds West Michigan to information already available for both Southeast Michigan and state trunklines that have an I, US, or M designation. That information is available at [www.mdot.state.mi.us/laneclosure](http://www.mdot.state.mi.us/laneclosure) or from the MDOT home page at [www.michigan.gov/mdot](http://www.michigan.gov/mdot).

**FREEDOM TO WORK INITIATIVE NOW LAW.** Working closely with the disability community, the Legislature recently passed legislation that would amend state laws governing the rights of persons with disabilities. The new law will greatly improve current guidelines for Medicaid recipients and has been hailed by disabilities rights advocates across the state. Current rules often result in the loss of crucial health benefits for persons with disabilities, on Medicaid, who go to work. The rules will now change the maximum amounts that individuals may both earn and save and still retain their health care coverage.

**SIGN-UP FOR NATIONAL DO-NOT-CALL REGISTRY BEGINS.** Consumers may now take steps to control unsolicited sales calls with the start of registration for the national Do-Not-Call list. Consumers can register online with the Federal Trade Commission at <http://www.donotcall.gov> or call toll-free 1-888-382-1222 beginning today. There is no enrollment fee. Last December, the Michigan Legislature passed a bill to restrict telemarketers and create a list for residents wishing to participate in the no-call option. At that time, a provision was added that has now allowed the state to adopt the national registry, giving residents the convenience of registering one time. Consumers should note: this new opportunity has led to a new wave of scams targeting residents looking to be added to the list. Just a reminder, registration with the Federal Trade Commission is free and cannot be done through private companies calling with special offers. More information on how to register or avoid a scam can be obtained at [www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov).

**DID YOU KNOW?** That Fannie Richards was the state's first African American public school teacher and founded Michigan's first public school kindergarten.